

## [Review] Nicholas B. Miller(2017) John Millar and the Scottish enlightenment: family life and world history

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aristocracy were authorized to confiscate such weapons and collect the fines imposed by magistrates. The attempt to keep guns out of the hands of the lower orders was undercut by the widespread practice of substantial householders hiring substitutes to serve in the county militias. Thus, service in the trained bands, as well as participation in overseas military expeditions did much to create what Schwoerer describes as “an early modern domestic gun culture as well as a military gun culture.” As familiarity with the use of gunpowder weapons spread among the populace, it comes as no surprise that they came to be used to commit murder and assassination. During the seventeenth century unsuccessful attempts were made to kill both Charles II and William III.

Schwoerer wrote this book to refute the idea that the American Founding Fathers drafted the Second Amendment to the Constitution based on their knowledge of Article VII of the English Declaration of Rights of 1689. The Second Amendment gave the right to bear arms to all citizens; Article VII severely restricted the right to possess weapons to a small minority whose qualifications were based on wealth, social standing, adherence to the Protestant religion, and the legal right to hunt under the numerous game laws. Both documents also expressed a strong prejudice against standing armies and in favor of militias—something that modern American jurists and legislators continue to ignore.

In discussing how the English aristocracy employed guns for field sports, the author fails to make a distinction between “hunting” and “shooting” in British usage. Guns were used for shooting hare or birds but were not used for hunting, which meant pursuing deer on horseback. When fox hunting replaced deer hunting in England in the eighteenth century, the same distinction held true. Also, when gentlemen served an apprenticeship in arms, they almost invariably chose to be pikemen rather than musketeers, because they continued to prefer edged weapons rather than gunpowder weapons well into the seventeenth century.

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**John Millar and the Scottish Enlightenment: Family Life and World History.** By *Nicholas B. Miller*. Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment. Edited by *Gregory S. Brown*.

Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2017. Pp. xii+240. £60.00.

Intellectual historians have begun to pay increasing attention to the richness and subtlety of early modern discussions of gender and familial relations, and this book represents a significant contribution to that enterprise. Ideas of marriage, of paternal and maternal authority, of romantic love, and of men's and women's moral and physical capacities have been revealed as central to European political debate and intellectual life between the Renaissance and, say, Friedrich Engels's 1884 inquiry into the origins of the patriarchal family. For the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the issue of gender has sometimes been framed as a binary tussle between those who feared the emasculating consequences of a feminized commercial society and those who celebrated the civilizing potential of women's participation in the “public sphere.” Nicholas B. Miller's book goes well beyond that debate by using eighteenth-century discussions of the history and diversity of family forms and gender relationships as a means of providing an alternative perspective on Scottish Enlightenment histories of civilization, narratives of European progress, and the Scottish “science of man.” The result will be of interest not only to specialists in the Scottish

Enlightenment but also to scholars interested in the place of gender in Enlightenment approaches to “world history.”

The book is presented as a study of the Scottish theorist, John Millar, professor of civil law at Glasgow between 1761 and 1800 and best known as the author of the *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (1771–79). Miller does not, however, provide us with a comprehensive account of Millar’s intellectual enterprise and, instead, offers five thematic chapters tracing Millar’s (and his contemporaries’) engagement with Enlightenment-era discussions of polygamy, matriarchal authority, the Amazon myth, interracial coupling in Spanish America, and issues of education and reform in commercial society. The scope of the book is perhaps better indicated by its subtitle, “family life and world history.” While integrating adjacent controversies about race, slavery, and populousness, the book’s key theme is how the specificity and diversity of familial structures across the globe, and stretching back to antiquity, intersected with the stadial histories of society developed by the Scots. On the one hand, Millar and his contemporaries were attuned to Montesquieu’s presentation of the sheer mutability of human sexual and familial practices across the globe, from the mythical Amazons of ancient Scythia to the ostensible “gynaecocracy” established in the Mariana Islands. On the other hand, their commitment to a linear or stadial understanding of societal progress generated blind spots and at times acted as a kind of intellectual straitjacket.

Miller discusses a vast array of the texts that informed Millar’s inquiry, and many of these are likely to be unfamiliar even to specialists in the Enlightenment. We learn a great deal, for instance, about Pierre Petit, whose late seventeenth-century arguments for the existence of Amazonian “female republics” rested upon a Cartesian account of soul-body relations. While no proto-feminist, Petit’s arguments for the plausibility of the Amazons reflected an unusual degree of faith in the ways that gender relations could be reshaped by culture, custom, and education. We also learn a lot about Enlightenment debates about the matriarchal society ostensibly established in the “Ladrones” (the Mariana Islands), particularly as transmitted through the work of Charles-Marie Le Gobien, a secondhand source for Millar’s own history of the family and his tentative appraisal of the possibility of female predominance in the early history of mankind. Miller pays close attention to the ways in which these sources were read, misread, modified, translated, or ignored by Millar and others, an approach that is designed to shed light on the “methods and politics” informing the Scots’ approach to their sources. At times it is unclear whether this detailed textual scrutiny really does result in a deeper appreciation of the guiding principles informing Millar’s intellectual choices. Nevertheless, Miller conveys a vivid impression of how Enlightened Scots reworked the resources available to them in their efforts to bring family and gender relationships within the remit of their histories of civil society.

One broader—and more polemical—argument made by Miller is that the Scots’ understanding of gender relations and marriage was intimately bound up with assumptions about European exceptionalism—or “Eurocentrism.” As he shows in his first chapter, most Scots in the period saw monogamous marriage as a distinctive “European particularity” that was both morally and socially superior to the forms of polygamy practiced in “the East.” His broader point is that monogamy, and the ostensibly more egalitarian gender relationships it fostered, formed a key plank in an Enlightened narrative of Europe’s special path. While William Robertson ascribed this to the spirit of Christianity, Miller claimed that modern Europe owed these more egalitarian gender relations to the spirit of chivalry, which had served to block the emergence of the polygamous marriage forms that established themselves in other wealthy societies. Seen from this perspective, Scottish Enlightenment arguments that the improved condition of women in Europe’s

commercial societies was a marker of civilization is revealed as something more problematically parochial, insofar as these rested on self-congratulatory ideas about the specificity of European monogamous marriage. Again, here Miller is seeking to expose some of the limitations of the Scottish approach to the “science of man.”

As indicated, much of this book is not about Millar. This is, however, only really problematic in the fourth chapter, which is instead organized around the work of the historian William Robertson and eighteenth-century perspectives on interracial unions and the resulting *sistema de castas* that had emerged in much of Spanish America. A more perplexing feature of the work is the relative invisibility of Adam Smith, whose own thinking in both his Glasgow *Lectures on Jurisprudence* and even in *The Wealth of Nations* tracked, at times in detail, many of the themes considered here. Given that Millar is often seen as the Scottish writer who most faithfully sought to develop Smith’s approach to the “science of the legislator,” the absence of a fuller consideration of Smith’s own discussions of marriage and family relations seems curious. Still, Miller does provide convincing accounts of what other Scots (Ferguson, Kames, Robertson, Dunbar) and other Europeans (Raynal, Diderot) had to say on these topics. While specialists may have desired a fuller account of the implications of this part of Millar’s project for our understanding of the Scottish Enlightenment as a whole, those interested in wider Enlightenment investigations into the global and temporal diversity of human sexual, marital, and familial practices will find much of interest in this stimulating book.

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**Collecting the World: Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum.** By James Delbourgo.

Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017. Pp. xxxii+504. \$35.00.

Late in this new biography, James Delbourgo describes his subject, eighteenth-century British physician and collector Hans Sloane, as “a master interloper in an interloper’s world” (340). Plantation and empire were driving forces in Sloane’s life. He built a fortune not only from medical fees, but also from slave holding, and turned that fortune to “collecting the world.” Through his travels and his correspondence, he made contacts across the British Empire: men and women; enslaved Africans in Jamaica and West African slave traders; apothecaries, physicians, artists, travelers, and merchants. He and his collections became magnets for natural and human-made objects from across the British Empire. For Sloane, these collections illustrated the world’s divine order. They spoke of the rational foundations of medicine and natural philosophy (Sloane detested magic, collecting amulets and astrologers’ papers to show up its folly). And they demonstrated Protestant Britain’s position on the highest human rung in a God-given natural and social hierarchy, exploiting nature and other humans by divine command. As an interloper in an interloper’s world, he perhaps cleaved all the more to these natural and social hierarchies.

Delbourgo places Sloane’s engagement with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and British slavery in Jamaica at the heart of his biography. This story has not been properly told before, and its telling is one of the great achievements of this book. From 1687 to 1689, Sloane served as the personal physician to the duke of Albemarle, the colonial governor